



# U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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## *News Advisory*

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## **Sensenbrenner: House Passes Legislation Extending PATRIOT Act Until March 10<sup>th</sup>**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The House today by voice vote approved legislation extending the expiring provisions of the PATRIOT Act until March 10<sup>th</sup>. This legislation, H.R. 4659, ensures this vital antiterrorism law does not expire and gives the Senate more time to consider the House-Senate conference report that the House passed in December with the support of 44 Democrats and nearly all Republicans. The Senate is expected to pass this legislation today or tomorrow.

House Judiciary Committee Chairman F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr. (R-Wis.), who introduced this extension legislation yesterday, delivered the following remarks during today's House debate:

“Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 4659, to extend until March 10th crucial provisions of the PATRIOT Act set to expire this Friday.

“On December 23rd of last year, both houses unanimously passed a short-term extension of the PATRIOT Act to preserve critical antiterrorism initiatives that were set to expire at the end of last year. Unfortunately, we must pass another extension today because a minority of Members of the other body have blocked an up-or-down vote on the conference report for H.R. 3199, the “USA PATRIOT and Terrorism Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2005,” which the full House passed by a broad bipartisan vote of 257-171 on December 14.

“These opponents in the other body has repeatedly cited their concern for civil liberties as a justification for their obstruction. Ironically, the Conference Report that has been blocked contains dozens of vital civil liberties protections – many included at their request.

“The original PATRIOT Act contains none of these protections. As a result, we are once again forced to extend the current PATRIOT Act rather than implement the important civil liberties protections contained in a Conference Report that even its detractors acknowledge is an improvement over current law.

“When the PATRIOT Act was passed in October of 2001, I pledged to rigorously examine its implementation to ensure that new law enforcement authorities did not violate civil liberties. Since April of 2005 alone, the House Judiciary Committee received testimony from 35 witnesses

during 12 hearings on the PATRIOT Act. In addition to hearings, I have requested – along with Ranking Member Conyers – written responses from the Attorney General to detailed questions regarding use of the PATRIOT Act and whether any of its provisions have been used to violate individuals’ civil liberties. I ask unanimous consent to include a chronology of these legislative and oversight activities in the *Congressional Record*.

“The Inspector General has issued six reports and found no evidence that law enforcement has abused the PATRIOT Act. Opponents of the PATRIOT Act have repeatedly pointed to the Brandon Mayfield case as an example of abuse of the Act. Members of Congress asked the DOJ Inspector General to examine whether the PATRIOT Act was abused in this case. On January 6, 2006, the Inspector General concluded: “We did not find any evidence that the FBI misused any of the provisions of the Patriot Act in conducting its investigation of Mayfield.”

“Even though no credible evidence of abuse of the PATRIOT Act has been received by Congress, the Conference Report adopted over 30 new additional civil liberty protections to address concerns about the *potential* for misuse. For example, the Conference Report contains several new reporting requirements that will provide additional information for congressional oversight of the Act. These provisions establish specific procedures to consult legal counsel and seek judicial review for those wishing to challenge a National Security Letter or a section 215 order – two of the authorities most criticized by opponents.

“Additionally, the Conference Report increases accountability by requiring the FBI Director, Deputy Director, or Executive Assistant Director to authorize applications that request the FISA Court issue a section 215 order for certain records, including library records, medical records, educational records, and tax return records. The Conference Report also requires **public** reporting of the aggregate use of section 215 orders.

“Because time does not permit me to detail all of the civil liberty protections contained in the Conference Report, I ask unanimous consent to include in the record a list detailing each of those safeguards.

“I would remind Members of both houses that the conference committee dissolved after the Conference Report was filed and the House acted in a bipartisan manner to approve it.

“I believe it is healthy to continue to debate the merits of the PATRIOT Act and to conduct vigorous Congressional oversight of its authorities, but it is also imperative that we not play political games with the vital tools our law enforcement and intelligence communities need to keep us safe from additional attacks on American soil.

“We must not rebuild the wall of separation between the FBI and the CIA and return to the pre 9-11 mindset that made America vulnerable to terrorist attack. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this extension of the PATRIOT Act and encourage my colleagues in the other body to expeditiously pass the Conference Report for H.R. 3199. As recent events have highlighted, the threat of terrorism has not receded, nor has the urgency of continued vigilance.”

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